



Script to Screen founder Ken Kerry (left) with former U.S. Open champion Corey Pavin during an infomercial shoot for PRGR

Greens to screens

Company has made some of the top golf infomercials • BY JOEL BEERS

By a very roundabout way, the golf industry can thank Ronald Reagan for one of the biggest shots of adrenaline it has received over the past 20 years.

It was then-President Reagan's deregulation in 1984 of television that allowed stations to program as much advertising as they wished. This led to the rise of infomercials and direct response commercials, advertising vehicles that a growing number of golf manufacturers are using to sell their products and claim name recognition.

"Golf is perfectly suited for infomercials," Tony Kerry, vice president for marketing for Script to Screen, a Santa Ana-based production company, said. "TV is a visual medium. We're in the business of demonstrating how products work. That goes hand in hand with the golf industry, which has to visually demonstrate how a new technology or a golf club works. Next to having a club in your hand, there's nothing better than seeing a product demonstrated on TV."

Script to Screen was founded in 1985 by Barbara and Ken Kerry, a husband-and-wife team with extensive sports broadcasting experience. Barbara worked for Fox Television and Ken worked with ABC's Wide World of Sports. They decided to launch their own direct marketing company, but their first effort, a self-help cassette tape, tanked.

In 1990, Script to Screen scored its first big success by producing a commercial for Hooked on Phonics.

Today, nearly a third of the company's business is golf related. The company has produced some of the most successful golf infomercials in the short history of the format, including commercials for the alien Ultimate

Wedge, Adams' Tight Lies and TaylorMade Golf's Monster Hole Challenge.

Its Ultimate Wedge infomercial, which it produced in 1994 for Alien sport, is considered the grandfather of golf infomercials. The marketers of the product bypassed the traditional retail route of promoting a product, choosing instead to gamble on a direct response TV campaign. To date, more than 500,000 clubs have been sold, transforming an unknown company into a major player in less than a year.

(Script to Screen isn't just about quantity. The Ultimate Wedge infomercial has won three major awards, including a Clio Award.)

In 1997, Script to Screen notched another huge success by producing a commercial for Barney Adams, the founder of Adams Golf Ltd. The product was the Adams Tight Lies, a low-profile fairway wood featuring a low center of gravity in the clubhead. The success of the club helped turn the relatively small Adams company into an \$85 million player, and sparked Orlimar's marketing of its Trimetal fairway woods, Callaway's HawkEye wood and TaylorMade's FireSole irons.

Script to Screen has also produced commercials for TaylorMade's Burner Bubble and recently produced the Pearson Wedge and Driver infomercials.

For its efforts, Script to Screen is recognized as one of the leading forces in direct response marketing television, a \$5-billion industry. In large part because of Script to Screen's successes, the golf industry has awakened to the idea of using infomercials, Tony Kerry said.

"What's happened is that because of the success of Alien and Adams, the golf commu-



nity has recognized infomercials as a great vehicle to tell their story," he said

Up-and-coming golf manufacturers can specifically benefit from infomercials, Kerry said, because the golf industry has a tremendously unfair playing field.

"You've got companies like Callaway and TaylorMade that have substantial marketing budgets, and for a middle size or up-and-coming company to compete on that level is just impossible," he said. "So they need to make their advertising dollars work for them.

"If a company utilizes an infomercial, they're going to spend a few hundred thousand as opposed to the millions of dollars they'd spend on traditional national print advertising."

Most infomercials cost between \$250,000 and \$350,000, Kerry said. Script to Screen produces the show as well as helping manage the company's media buying, telemarketing, credit card processing and packaging design.

Even though Script to Screen can tout real evidence of the value of infomercials, there's still a wary attitude toward the form among more traditional quarters.

"This is a business side to the golf industry that a lot of the industry doesn't want to talk about," Kerry said. "The advent of the infomercial has given the entrepreneur and the small golf company the opportunity to challenge for a market share."